



Rep. Michelle Rehwinkel Vasilinda
Florida House of Representatives
District 9

September 17, 2010

The Honorable Charlie Crist
Governor, State of Florida
PL 05, The Capitol
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

The Honorable Larry Cretul
Speaker, Florida House of Representatives
402 South Monroe Street,
Room 420, The Capitol
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1300

The Honorable Jeff Atwater
President, The Florida Senate
404 South Monroe Street
Room 409, The Capitol
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Dear Governor Crist, Speaker Cretul and President Atwater:

I write to secure your support for a bipartisan legislative proposal to provide necessary funding for Florida's businesses and homeowners to install solar panels and to make other essential energy conservation improvements to residential and commercial properties – which would also help stimulate the economy by creating green jobs.

In recent days, there has been considerable public attention given to the state's popular solar rebate program created in 2006. I appreciate the public debate about this important topic and I am hopeful that the discussion leads to a productive outcome and a more secure energy future for Florida.

While I support Governor Crist's request for action from the Legislative Budget Commission to put to use available federal funds for the state's popular solar rebate program, I write today to draw your attention to an alternative strategy. I urge your support for creating a Public Benefits Fund as a secure, recurring source of funding for renewable energy programs.

During the 2010 legislative session, I sponsored a bill with Republican state Senator Mike Bennett of Bradenton to establish this fund and, in doing so, expect to relieve or eliminate the estimated \$52 million backlog in funding the state's solar rebate program. When we introduced

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this legislation, 22 other states had established some sort of Public Benefit Fund to support renewable and energy efficiencies and conservation projects.

Under a Public Benefits Fund, a monthly 0.25 cents charge, or \$3 a year, to each Florida utility customer, will yield substantial funding for renewable energy initiatives, energy conservation strategies, and to help our residents homeowners and businesses to make needed improvements, as well as to restore the solar rebate program.

In addition, by designing the fund as a Direct Support Organization, as Senator Bennett and I proposed in House Bill 1267, House Bill 1269, Senate Bill 2404 and Senate Bill 2406, Florida will be permitted to put to use additional funds from the federal government, grant monies, bequests, and other gifts.

As you might imagine, the benefit of creating such a fund goes far beyond helping Florida meet our state's energy needs and modernizing infrastructure. Creating a Public Benefits Fund also will help our economy by creating new jobs and employing more Floridians in the burgeoning renewable energy sector.

Only through adopting significant policies to change our energy future can we truly make a difference for generations to come.

I look forward to hearing soon of your support for this important – and bipartisan -- policy proposal. Thank you for your serious consideration.

Sincerely,



Michelle Rehwinkel Vasilinda
Representative, Florida House District 9

MVR:aac

cc: Representative Franklin Sands
Representative Geraldine F. Thompson
Senator Alfred "Al" Lawson, Jr.
Senator Charlie Justice